
Document 1570B

Letter from Fr. Herrera to the Viceroy of New Spain, dated Panay July 1570

Sources: AGI; translated in Lopez & Felix, Christianization of the Philippines, Manila, 1965, doc. 13, pp. 332-336.

Fr. Herrera mentions his visit to Guam 12-15 May 1570

Although your Excellency was in a great hurry and we were as diligent as humanly possible, still we were not able to leave the port as soon as all wished. We left on 9 March as your Excellency now knows and I was afraid for I thought we would have a longer and harsher voyage than we actually had as the season was already advanced. However, by the grace of God we had 40 days of good weather and had we had another 20 as good, we would have gotten to the Philippines. But, at the end of 40 days, the winds ceased to blow and though we were 100 leagues from the Ladrone Islands, it took us some time to get there and we only arrived at the island of Guam on 12 May.

There we spent as little time as possible in refilling our water casks and in taking aboard firewood, while the crew laundered their clothing. So as not to lose time, we left Guam on 15 May with reasonably good weather.

Three or four days later, we met a typhoon and the contrary winds were so strong that not only were we unable to sail forward but we were actually pushed back 25 to 30 leagues. With God's grace, we then continued in fair weather until we sighted land in the Philippines on 4 June.

The Indians told us where we could find the Governor and that there was no news as to whether the Portuguese had entered the islands. So, we got to an island that they call Maripipi¹ on 7 June and from there I went to Panay to visit the Governor together with Captain Juan de la Isla where he was then, that we might know where he wanted the vessels to go, for there is no port in Panay and ships must take cover near a small

1 Ed. note: Maripipi is located off the SE tip of Masbate and N of Leyte.

island lying at the mouth of the river where the Governor lives, a place which is dangerous for vessels as the pilots and quarter-masters believe.

When I got to this river of Panay where the Governor was, they were glad that I had come and they were equally glad of the aid and reinforcements sent by His Majesty and Your Excellency aboard the **three vessels**¹ and the Governor ordered that the vessels should come to Panay although many were of different opinion. I myself thought that his decision was wrong for the port was bad and it would be hard to unload the vessels. Also, there was over one league and a half from the anchorage to the town and the sand-bar at the mouth of the river made passage difficult.

Nevertheless, on 22 June the vessels got there and when the men aboard saw this sad and stricken place in which we are now settled they were sad. The swamps looked bad and the houses were built by the bank of the river where the water is brackish so that when the river rises it is necessary to go by boat from house to house. It is hot and unhealthy and it rains day and night and although before we came, food was abundant now we lack food. Also, we are very much afraid of the Portuguese so that if the men here found a place that is better hidden they would go there although it might be a worse place and although the Portuguese may not come in the end, these men will not dare to leave for Cebu unless somebody should impose some order.²

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- 1 Ed. note: One of the three vessels was the returning patache San Lucas, but the names of the other two ships are unknown.
 - 2 Ed. note: Legazpi moved back to Cebu in November 1570. There is also a letter by Fr. Juan de Alva to the Viceroy, dated 28 July 1570, which was printed in *Archivo-Histórico Hispano-Agustiniano*, vol. LIV (Valladolid 1960), on pages 399-400.